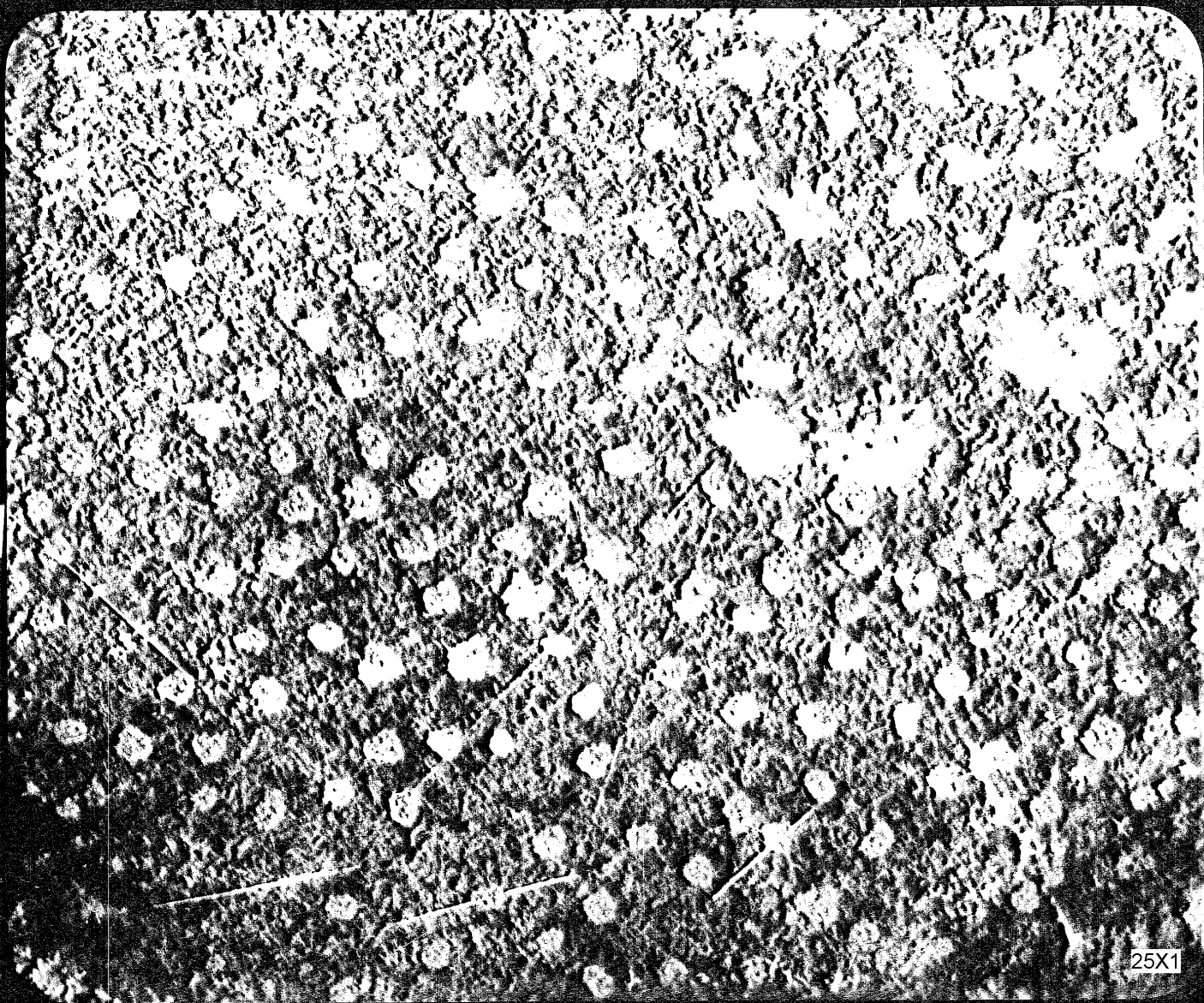


Approved For Release 2009/04/30 : CIA-RDP83-01074R000100570004-4

25X1

N 1869/69



25X1

Approved For Release 2009/04/30 : CIA-RDP83-01074R000100570004-4

~~SECRET~~

N-1869

LAOTIAN "SCARECROWS"

During late 1965, when NPIC was first developing the photographic signatures which later proved so successful in identifying communist insurgent activity in Southeast Asia, an unidentified "facility" was observed in the mountainous area of eastern Laos. The facility consisted of a hut-like structure with radiating wires and, since it was adjacent to a cleared area containing anti-helicopter stakes, it was reported as "suspect insurgency activity" (NPIC Board K-4009). Analysis of subsequent missions revealed that this was a widespread phenomenon, and they were soon identified as a type of indigenous "scarecrow" with deep socio-economic significance.

The "scarecrows" consist of an elevated hut or platform with a system of wires---rope or vines may also be used---radiating over the "slash and burn" fields. Tin cans or strips of cloth are suspended from the wires and, when animals or birds enter the field, the farmer shakes the appropriate wire to frighten them away. Since the animals and birds which eat grain are the embodiment of "evil spirits", the apparatus takes on a religious significance which sometimes make the associated activity unpredictable.

In September---four years later---NPIC began receiving cables from various field units which identified exotic communications relay facilities in eastern Laos. These "facilities" were checked by NPIC and, with few exceptions, turned out to be "scarecrows". After a proliferation of such cables and evidence that strikes were being scheduled against the "facilities", NPIC issued a nonconcurrence cable on a representative site reported by FICPACFAC.

25X1